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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 005267

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SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES IN JORDAN RAMPING UP IRAQ PLANNING ACTIVITIES; WARN OF MINIMAL STOCKS IN REGION AND CONSEQUENCES OF OFF DISRUPTION

REF: GENEVA 3883 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CDA Greg Berry, per 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Humanitarian agencies in Jordan have stepped up contingency planning efforts for a crisis in Iraq. Estimated refugee flows (10,000 into Jordan over six months) match those provided reftel, but UN sources admit that they are based only on conjecture and, in fact, are purposely conservative to bring estimated financial needs into a reasonable range. IOM reports that current UN planning does not include repatriation for the up-to 170,000 TCN's believed to be in Iraq or the 250,000 guest workers throughout the region. UN, ICRC and IFRC representatives warned separately that there are no stockpiles of non-food relief supplies in the region and that it would take two weeks to move resources from other areas. ICRC and IFRC representatives in Jordan (who support programs in Iraq) also warned that disruption of the OFF program in Iraq would affect the entire nation's food supply. They fear also that Iraq's already-weakened water and sanitation systems are ill-equipped to handle new hostilities or new population flows. Finally, worst-case scenarios in Jordan include the possibility of new refugee flows from the West Bank, a scenario UNRWA currently cannot handle. End summary.

UNHCR: Worried about Lack of Regional Stockpiles and Thin Staffing

12. (C) As reported reftel, UNHCR has lead responsibility for contingency planning in the region, and would be responsible for its usual refugee registration and protection function should a crisis begin in Iraq. Current UNHCR planning reflects a likely initial refugee flow of 3,000 into Jordan, with a total flow of 10,000 refugees over six months. (These figures do not include the up-to 100,000 third-country nationals that IOM believes may seek repatriation from Iraq through Jordan. See para 7 for details.) However, UNHCR Representative Sten Bronee admitted that these figures are based only on conjecture and, in fact, are purposely conservative to bring projected financial needs into a reasonable range. Bronee said UNHCR's budget, submitted to UNHCR/Geneva for inclusion in a region-wide humanitarian action response plan, includes USD 90,000 to preposition non-food supplies for the initial refugee flow, plus an additional USD 385,000 to care for the 10,000 refugees expected over six months. These figures were developed in coordination with UNHCR's technical assessment team, currently touring the region in an effort to finalize projected contingency needs.

13. (C) UNHCR Inspector General Maureen Connelly, in Jordan as part of a larger regional tour, told Charge September 10 that UNHCR currently has no/no stocks in the region, severely hampering its ability to respond to a crisis. According to Connelly, UNHCR lacks basics such as tents, blankets, cooking kits, water purification kits, sanitation kits and vehicles -- essential items that the UN cannot stockpile under current limited funding. Connelly said she also is worried about the ability of UNHCR's already thinly stretched staff to respond to a crisis. Jordan Representative Bronee, for example, will be in Sudan on a two-month mission, leaving the Senior Protection Officer as the only full-time international employee at UNHCR/Jordan.

14. (C) Connelly also told the Charge UNHCR is worried about the GOJ's reluctance to engage in detailed planning discussions with the UN. UNHCR/Jordan Representative Bronee had told us earlier that planning discussions with the GOJ are based on the GOJ's oft-stated public position that its borders are closed. Bronee said that while he appreciates the GOJ's difficult political position, its reluctance to engage even in quiet, low-level discussions with the UN about practicalities such as water supply or warehousing capabilities is hampering the UN's planning efforts. Without such discussions, UNHCR fears that it will face a scenario of Iraqi refugees stranded in the desert without access to food, shelter or water. (Comment: We are addressing this issue with the GOJ.)

WFP: 13,000 Tons of Wheat on-Hand

15. (C) According to WFP Representative Marwan Kokash, the World Food Program currently has 13,000 tons of wheat in its Jordan warehouses. Of that amount, 4,000 tons are to be turned over to the GOJ to replenish stocks lent to WFP when a previous shipment was delayed. The remaining 9,000 tons will be used in WFP's regular Jordan development programs and are intended to keep these programs running through September 2003. In addition, WFP has contracted with ICRC to import through Jordan 6,000 tons of wheat for the ICRC's West Bank rural food distribution programs. ICRC Delegate Guy Mellet told refcoo that ICRC contingency planning calls for diversion of this wheat to Iraq, if necessary. The wheat is scheduled to be distributed in the West Bank in November. Mellet noted that the ICRC's 15 trucks and international drivers, currently used for transportation of relief supplies between Jordan and the West Bank, also could be diverted to respond to a crisis in Iraq.

16. (C) Although WFP has some excess wheat stocks, Kokash told refcoo WFP lacks the stocks of cooking oil and enriched biscuits necessary to respond immediately to a crisis. Kokash estimates that WFP would need 50 tons each of cooking oil and enriched biscuits to respond to initial refugee flows into Jordan, and has submitted these figures to the UN-wide humanitarian action response plan. Kokash warned that without these stocks, the UN will be unable to meet refugees' food needs during the first two weeks of a crisis.

IOM: Preparing for 100,000 TCN's

17. (C) IOM Representative Georgette Hosche reports that there are between 70,000 and 170,000 third-country nationals (Egyptian, Sudanese and Palestinian) currently resident in Iraq. IOM contingency planning calls for the repatriation of up to 100,000 TCN's (mainly Egyptians) through Jordan, but notes that up to 250,000 guest workers throughout the Middle East may seek IOM assistance in returning home in the event of hostilities in Iraq. IOM's contingency budget for repatriations through Jordan calls for USD 1.9 million, a figure that has not been included in the UN's humanitarian action response plan. Hosche told refcoo that IOM also is prepared to assist UNHCR in registration of refugees, if needed. Hosche echoed UNHCR's concerns about the current lack of coordination with the GOJ, noting that huge numbers of TCN's could end up stuck in the desert without access to food, shelter or water.

ICRC & IFRC: Worried about Stockpiles and Potential Disruptions to OFF, Water System in Iraq

18. (C) In separate meetings with refcoo, Jordan-based ICRC and IFRC officials expressed concern about their own lack of stockpiles. Although the ICRC has "huge" warehousing capacities in Amman, its regional administrative efforts currently are focused on supporting relief activities in the West Bank and Gaza -- some of which could be diverted to Iraq (see para 6). However, ICRC Jordan Delegate Guy Mellet reports that ICRC would have to airlift supplies from its Kenya warehouses in order to meet non-food needs resulting from hostilities in Iraq. According to IFRC Regional Delegate Christer Aqvist, the Federation currently only has 25 percent of the non-food supplies it estimates would be necessary to provide support to an initial flow of 100,000 displaced persons within Iraq. Without a stockpile of these supplies (tents, blankets, cooking kits, medical supplies, etc.), Aqvist predicted that the first two weeks of a crisis would be a "disaster." Aqvist noted that the IFRC had submitted a USD 1.5 million Iraq emergency preparedness proposal to the American Red Cross, but that the proposal had been rejected.

19. (C) Both ICRC and IFRC expressed serious concern about the Iraqi population's dependence on the Oil-for-Food program and the serious implications of any disruption in the program. IFRC Iraq Delegate Sten Swedlund (in Jordan for IFRC meetings) told refcoo "the entire population" of Iraq is dependent on the OFF program for its food supply. Any disruption in OFF, Swedlund warned, could lead to serious malnutrition problems. IFRC public health specialist Greet DeVries characterized the Iraqis as a population "on the edge" both physically and psychologically. As reported in UNICEF's 2001 survey of children in Iraq, almost one-third of children in the southern and central areas of Iraq suffer from malnutrition and one in eight children in those areas die before their fifth birthday. DeVries warned that any disruption in the OFF program could cause the figures to worsen still further. DeVries noted that no one she had met during a recent month-long tour of Iraq had stockpiled food or water supplies in their homes.

10. (C) ICRC and IFRC also warned separately of the dangers of disruptions to Iraq's water supplies. According to ICRC

Delegate Guy Mellet Iraq's water supply system fell into a serious state of disrepair when the guest workers who previously had maintained the system fled Iraq in 1990-1991. Since then, the ICRC has maintained the system and IFRC has tried to work through the Iraq Red Crescent Society to educate Iraqis on the proper way to treat unclean water, yet rates of fatal diarrhea have continued to rise in Iraq. In order to manage the effects of any hostilities-inflicted damage to the Iraq's water system, the IFRC believes an immediate relief response would have to include jerry cans with purification tablets. IFRC Iraq Delegate Swedlund is especially concerned about water and sanitation capabilities in northern Iraq. He said the infrastructure there, already strained by population flows throughout the 1990s, cannot handle new population flows without new resources.

UNRWA: Fears of a Two-Front Refugee Crisis

¶11. (C) Finally, UNRWA Jordan Field Director Bill Lee told refcoo that relief agencies in Jordan are especially concerned about the possibility of a two-front refugee crisis, should Israeli policy or a new round of major violence cause Palestinians to flee in significant numbers. Lee reported that UNRWA, perpetually underfunded and currently focused on emergency relief operations in the West Bank and Gaza, does not have the capacity to respond to a new Palestinian refugee flow into Jordan. Lee also expressed doubt that the GOJ would allow new Palestinians into Jordan.

Comment

¶12. (C) We are engaging with the GOJ to make sure they are addressing the possibility of movement of TCN's through and/or refugees into Jordan, and are coordinating in a low-key fashion with the appropriate international assistance organizations to assess potential needs and available resources.

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